

USS Constitution Hosts Sunset Parade

Story by Seaman Apprentice Shannon S. Heavin, USS Constitution Public Affairs

CHARLESTOWN, Mass. -- The crew of USS Constitution hosted their annual Sunset Parade in the Charlestown Navy Yard, July 2.

The parade, which comes as part of Boston Navy Week June 30-July 5, celebrated the connection between Constitution's representation of naval heritage and New England's patriotic heritage.

"This is a valuable part of history passed on to each of the attendees tonight," said Lt. Cmdr. Anthony Savage, Constitution's executive officer. "It is my hope that everyone who sees our performance understands and appreciates the difficult and dangerous life the early Sailors of the United States endured."

The parade began at 6 p.m. on pier 1 with more than 250 people in attendance.

Constitution's Sailors performed boarding pike and gun drills. The drills simulated to spectators how Sailors prepared and fought in battle at sea during the age of sail.

"Through the boarding pike and gun drills, we're showing people the procedures of battle in 1812 that helped contribute to the freedom of America," said Seaman Alan Alcala of Constitution. "We're giving evidence of the bravery and patriotism of the men who served back in those days."

There were also performances by local groups, such as: the 1812 Marines, Middlesex fife and drum, Middlesex 4H fife and drum, USO Liberty Bells, Lexington Minute Men, Silver Dolphins and the Gaelic Column.

“It was wonderful to have the USS Constitution Sailors here,” said Dale Willson, an 1812 Marine. “I enjoyed every moment; the audience was amazed to see history alive. It was the perfect beginning to the Fourth of July weekend.”

The conclusion of the Sunset Parade took place at 8:25 p.m. It was timed so the final gun drill coincided with the firing of the ship’s saluting battery during evening colors at sunset.

“The performance was outstanding,” said Navy Capt. Mary Jo Majors, a spectator. “It was an event not to be missed.”

Boston Navy Week is one of 20 Navy Weeks planned across America for 2010. The primary purpose of Navy Week is to increase Navy awareness by presenting the Navy to Americans who live in cities that normally do not have a significant naval presence.

Constitution is located in the Charlestown Navy Yard of Boston Harbor. She is the world’s oldest commissioned warship afloat and welcomes more than 500,000 visitors a year. For more information on Constitution, visit <http://www.history.navy.mil/ussconstitution/> or join us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/ussconstitutionoffical>.